

Oral Questions

Crown corporations. As the minister knows, there have been announcements that some public servants will receive salary increases of some considerable magnitude. Some of these public servants have refused to discuss their salaries publicly and the government has consistently refused to indicate their level of salaries. Would the Acting Prime Minister please indicate to the House the justification in public policy for refusing even to reveal the ranges of salaries for heads of Crown corporations?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I have seen that such a practice exists in Canada, and it is not a practice exclusive to chairmen or presidents of Crown corporations. Such a practice exists in the private sector, also.

Mr. Nielsen: That's not right.

Mr. Pepin: I presume, inasmuch as Crown corporations in Canada are somewhat mid-way between public corporations and private ones, that this is the main reason for the existence of the practice. However, this being a prime ministerial prerogative, I will bring the question to the attention of the Prime Minister, and I am sure that he will want to give a more detailed answer to the question raised, in due course.

QUERY RESPECTING THE RANGES OF SALARIES

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): When the Acting Prime Minister brings the matter to the head of the government, would he please remind him that the development of this new fiction is of recent vintage and that, in fact, the salary ranges of former heads of Crown corporations were at least announced? At the same time, would the Acting Prime Minister argue the case before the Prime Minister that, since the public is involved, it is inappropriate that at least the ranges of salaries paid to those senior officials have not been made public?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): I will bring that to the attention of the Prime Minister. But, needless to say, most of the salaries of most of these gentlemen are now commonly known.

Some hon. Members: No, no!

Mr. Pepin: The salary of the president of CN is pretty well known.

Some hon. Members: No, no!

Mr. Pepin: The salary of the president of Air Canada is pretty well known.

Some hon. Members: No, no!

Mr. Pepin: We all know that they are higher than the salary of the Prime Minister.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

INCLUSION OF NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY IN DREE AGREEMENT

Hon. George Hees (Northumberland): Madam Speaker, I would like to address a question to the Minister of State for External Relations and congratulate him on his new appointment. I ask him this question as a member of the cabinet committee on economic and regional development. Would he advise the House whether he soon expects to be able to announce the entry of the county of Northumberland into the Eastern Ontario Subsidiary Agreement, a matter on which he has been working for the past 18 months?

An hon. Member: Come on, somebody!

Mr. Crombie: There he is!

Miss MacDonald: All three together!

Mr. Epp: You're not quite sure, are you, yet?

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of State (External Relations)): Madam Speaker, I think the question should be put to—

Mr. Epp: Somebody else.

Mr. De Bané: —to the minister responsible for DREE, but I am very happy to remind the hon. member that one of my last acts as minister responsible for DREE was to deliver a letter to his office by hand, stating that the draft of that agreement would be ready very soon. I also remind him that at my first meeting with the provincial government of Ontario, with his support, I stated my initiative to do something for the county of Northumberland. I hope that in the very near future that initiative will reach its final conclusion.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

FINANCING OF ENERGY PROJECT IN SOVIET UNION

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for International Trade. I wonder how the minister can justify a reported \$637 million in subsidized financing to Russia which will cost the Canadian taxpayers a reported \$198 million. All we will receive in return is \$275 million in Canadian equipment and services.

● (1500)

Hon. Ed Lumley (Minister of State (International Trade)): Madam Speaker, first, the negotiations for this contract were initiated in 1977. If Canada is successful in obtaining a contract, it will involve 16,500 man-years of work in Quebec, Ontario and western Canada. The figures which the hon. member read in one of the local papers, unfortunately, are